



The Creative Woman

Quarterly



HARRIET MONROE

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The Creative Woman is a quarterly published by Governors State University. We focus on a special topic in each issue, presented from a feminist perspective. We celebrate the creative achievements of women in many fields and appeal to inquiring minds. We publish fiction, poetry, book reviews, articles, photography and original graphics.

Cover photograph of Harriet Monroe from *A Poet's Life*, Harriet Monroe, The MacMillan Co., 1938

It seems quite appropriate to dedicate this issue of *The Creative Woman*, devoted primarily to poetry and fiction, to the most remarkable editor of poetry of this century. Harriet Monroe, born in Chicago, gave that city and indeed the 20th century a new voice—the voice of the poet, especially the American poet speaking in a new language. As the founder/editor of *Poetry* magazine, now in its *seventy-second year of continuous publication*, Harriet Monroe established a magazine exclusively for poets—a place where young poets could be heard and appreciated by an audience denied them in conventional journals of the day. Professing an open door policy, *Poetry* was independent of profit motive and thus was able to accept all poetry of excellence as literature. “The test, limited by ever-fallible human judgment, is to be quality above all.”

The history of Miss Monroe's magazine, although surely fallible, belies her fears: among the published ranks of *Poetry*: T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Ford Madox Ford, W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, Rupert Brooke, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, Joyce Kilmer, James Joyce, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, Elinor Wylie, Marianne Moore, Robinson Jeffers, and Stephen Spender.

An editor could not aspire to a more respected model of unerring taste. Miss Monroe is generally accepted as a true catalyst for the renaissance in American poetry—she provided the nurturing environs at a crucial point in literary history for the now recognized major poets of the 20th Century.

J.B.L.



From *RIISING GODDESS* by Cynthia MacAdams, published by Morgan & Morgan, Dobbs Ferry, New York.

TWO FRIENDS 1959

Two friends sitting on a porch
in clots of sunlight.
You prophesize we will die
before we are thirty.
My skin too thin
like a silk purse unsuited for use.
A small hole in your heart
causing strange music in your chest.
Like pieces of unmatched china
we converse as shade slowly consumes
our bodies.

Years later
we are still alive in separate cities.
You have buried three marriages
in Cleveland. Your heart
beats rock & roll
inside your ruffled blouse.
I am caged in mid-west winters
writing poems with skins
thicker than my own.
The seasons twist
like pages of a magazine.

Sandra Case

YOUNG WIFE EARLY SPRING

She stands naked
at the window,
her blond hair
swallows sun,
ice bleeds off
the blue spruce,
angles
of her body
begin to melt,
birds slide thru
thin air
gentle as dreams.

Sandra Case

EN ROUTE

Did we walk together
on many paths,
Or were you always
Miles ahead?

I know we were
Companions—friends,
For you stayed beside me
When the fog set in
And slowed your stride
To match my pace
On unexpected
Steep terrain.

Yet, you must have also
Been my guide,
For you traversed the realm
Ahead of me.

I would hurry forward
On verdant stretches
Eager to discover
All you had seen
Anxiously rushing
To achieve your site
Before it was only
Where you had been.

Are we here together
On this road?
Or did you leave me
Far behind?
Do we travel today
On different routes,
Or unknowing
Are we side by side?

I'm sure you must be
Somewhere near,
For I often travel
The path we shared
Through banks of fog
On steep terrain.
But I see the world
As you saw it first
With the glory of being
With humanity in rime,
So, yes, we're walking
Side-by-side.

L.E. Castner



AT THE EDGE OF LOVE

If I were a cat,
I would sit on your fence —
On the very top rail —
Just out of reach,
Keeping you in range.
You would think I was
Watching the birds,
But I would be gazing
In your window
Looking for you and
Listening for your car.

When you left, I would
Slip into your flowers
Hiding under plants,
Out of sight, waiting
Knowing when you returned.
Hearing footsteps inside,
I would give all nine lives
To be there behind you.

Yet I would never sneak
Into your house even if
You left your door
Temptingly ajar.
You might chase me out
Wanting solitude or
Peace of mind. Yes,
I would know my place.

But, if I were a cat,
I would never leave
The edges of your yard.

L.E. Castner



IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS

She had to buy tires for the car on borrowed money
 and tried to fix the air conditioning herself;
 she wrote away for instructions, but they never came.
 She was evicted from her house because she couldn't pay the taxes.
 And then she had to have a hysterectomy.
 And her daughter needed to go to college.
 She wanted to turn the ache inside her into
 something of value. She wanted to dance, just once,
 in a chiffon ball gown, red or yellow,
 or blue.

Sharon Dario

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

"Cybernetic Meadows watched over by machines of loving grace"

Richard Brautigan

Out from under the helix hex
 comes a child not of loins, but of mind;
 her exact ecstasy far
 from our carbon chemistries,
 from bone,
 from the edge of the earth.

Shimmering Shiva of the silicon shell sisters,
 mantissa for mantras, we are dinosaurs
 but you
 are more than fossil.

We pray the fusion (you iron anvil ark)
 of your brute, mute reason
 with our rough human love.

Sharon Dario

BIRTHDAY

My ragged fingernails betray me;
 I am not calm. I have turned
 Thirty-six, and my heart
 Has slipped through my fingers
 And into your net.
 My blood is thicker in these middle years
 As it rushes to your call,
 Surges to you, mocking me.
 Words that I do not fully understand
 Leap in my throat,
 And I am
 The captive of strange images.
 I wear my thirty-six years,
 A necklace of brilliants, heavy
 With pain and purpose.
 But my daughter
 Eight years of eagerness, grace
 Seems older than I, and I
 Ache to feel new life within me
 And the rising of milk, again, in my breasts.

Anne C. Fowler

A DAY IN THE HOSPITAL

Unannounced, you paid a visit
 The day after our daughter was born, wearing
 Your three piece funeral suit, and
 An accusatory look, and carrying
 A large plant wrapped in gold foil.
 Standing in the corner
 Most distant from where she lay
 You interrogated me about medication
 Until she began to cry.
- Get the nurse to come and take her away,
 You said, *- Get the nurse.*
- No, I said, the mother bear with her cub,
 And before I could rake my claws
 Across your deserving face
 You left. You never looked at her.
- What shall we do with the flowers?
 My mother asked, that afternoon.
- Get the nurse, I said, *- to come and take them away.*

Anne C. Fowler

TO MY FOREIGN LOVER

Do not worry, you
 Who are so afraid to be known
 I will never know you.
 Even when you
 Have crushed me to you completely
 In the rush of juices, meeting
 In every part, confusion
 Of tongues, fingers, surfaces of skin;
 And when you
 Have found your way so far down in me
 That the only route out
 Is through my heart;
 Then, most predictably, you are thinking
 In your first language, a tongue,
 Which I will never speak,
 Or understand.

Anne C. Fowler

MINCEMEAT

Are you aware, oh ex-beloved
 How deeply, sharply, wonderfully,
 Your image has been carved
 Upon my heart?
 I do remember your 3:00 a.m. urgency
 A fast cut-and-thrust, no preliminaries,
 To my half-knowing nearness.
 And I recall the razor's edge of doubt
 Shearing your words of meaning and belief
 Each time you said *tomorrow*.
 I do remember you
 Fencing with your own private God,
 Your foil for infidelity—
His will be done.
 But when all such incisive recollections
 Are faded to a surface scar,
 I will remember still
 The butcher, wiping his bloody hands
 On his bloodstained apron,
 And moving, smiling,
 On to the next job.

Anne C. Fowler

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

In tune with morning wind
 dozens of Swingtime fuschias
 swing against the sun-filled glass.
 I drop my dustcloth
 dance to open the window.
 My tears splash the sill.
 I fondle the scarlet camisoles
 the ivory tutus—leaves applaud.
 My toes touch carpet, we are ballet.
 Honeybees fly in for honey.

Nixeon Civile Handy

EARLY TRUTH

Born in a dance between father
 and mother, they were the railings
 I clung to across childhood's bridge.
 When mother died a stepmother stepped
 in her place. When father died she reached
 to act both railings.

Now my husband takes
 my arm. Our children attend endless crossings:
 their children's children.

Nixeon Civile Handy



DOMESTIC CROSSROADS

Ambiguous as wind or water, or chemic test tube
 the soul-rind eats away when the weather vane spins.
 I want to say this: Your decision rides
 an iron mind holding reins above the iron-bound
 wagon wheels, prairie deep.

My hour flows a river, green as surprise.

My canoe bends the shore leaps alive
 over blocking boulders.

When you must ford my river
 I will wait in cove.

When I need portage, will you hoist
 the canoe with me? May I ride
 buckboard beside you?

The pioneer sends a far call on a cloudy
 high road, a rainy echo that multiplies
 in sun to deafen.

Nixeon Civile Handy

OLD WOMAN PHOTOGRAPH B24

'Come here, girl.
 Let me fix dat bow in yo' hair.
 Can't be goin' 'round lookin'
 as po' as you really is."
 faded paisley
 skillfully cinched
 smooths the body
 nineteen children
 taut.
 for near a century
 she has spoken
 in tongues
 of hot hominy
 and
 something forever
 missing.
 she's cracked into cubes
 mirroring echoes. . .
 her bosom
 always warm
 for us.

Terri L. Jewell

KURU

she is jambalayan persimmon
 smoothed by gold coast sands
 and ripened like
 rare opal moonspin
 held between the lips
 she is a f-i-n-e sister
 in sheer gauze coverings
 and indian prints
 long silk scarves
 and
 heavy gold rings
 from spain
 piercing
 the full sickle of her ear
 and sadly
 some young dude
 will confuse her beauty
 strength
 pride
 with some kuru act of
 manhood. . .
 afterwards
 she will become an applique on a dark stairwell
 on some midnight roof
 on the thunderclouds
 she will spring like a released coil
 to find the fresh earth
 to anchor her true roots
 to stretch her limbs
 for
 the
 moon

Terri L. Jewell

PULLING A LOTUS FROM THE MUD

Wearing rough grey
surrounded by brown water
that will never be clear
the stink of rotten wood
dead fish

I lift the anchor
pulling a lotus from the mud
white veins on pink petals...
my fingers follow
smooth fragrant skin
in the pond of my mind

I look at the lotus framed
on a mirror...a picture given
by a friend who struggles daily
against the mire
from which her beauty rises

Gudrun Mouw

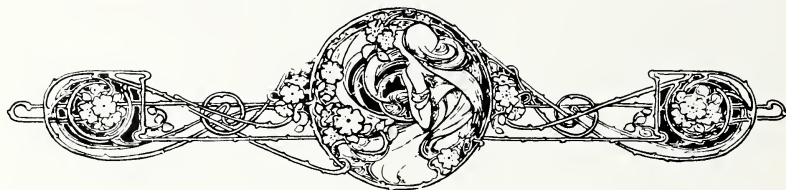
AN EVENING ALONE

Something is over
an orange sun topples
from the summit
sky burns up
a short twilight

Something begins
wind twirls a dead leaf
around the house
moon's pinched face
rises at the end of earth

Night lowers a dark sheet
over the window
moths beat themselves
against the lamplit glass
a face looks back at herself

Gudrun Mouw



ROTOGRAVURE

In a hiding place in my mind,
I have a scrapbook of pictures of you.
I put them in a montage of expressions and feelings—
tender moments are caught in ribbons of pastel,
other moments are tied in crayon-colored yarn.
The nighttime pictures are monochromatic splashes
of cerulean blue reflections in misty pools.
The daytime pictures are three dimensional technicolor.
Our quarrels are captured in sepia tones;
their edges having already curled,
I put them aside when I come across them.
The night we met is a black and white glossy.
My favorite picture of you, I take it out often.
You stand surrounded by dark Felini figures
with a luminescence around you,
and with the magic of trick photography,
the figures fade and disappear,
leaving you alone standing in the glow.

Maureen O'Toole

HEARTBEAT

I lie very still
listening to my heart beat,
an untamed captive bird
pounding against my ribs, so strong
the room itself seems to vibrate.
With the smile of a memory
I lie motionless
remembering the gentleness of your caress,
the sureness of your touch,
the orchestration you create.
My heart begins to slow to a quieter rhythm,
a flame-colored bird of Paradise
alive with loving you.

Maureen O'Toole

MAGGIE

Child, we are marking time
in this small space.
This yard
behind Klug's Dairy Store
where your mother buys seeds
to plant in the garden
that glows in her eyes
and her smile.

Being in this small space
is not hard.
We make it larger
by flinging our arms,
by moving our feet
one in front of the other
across a brace of wooden ties,
we balance ourselves.

You,
three year old,
who need my hands
girding your waist
so that you may laugh,
giggle,
feel safety
in the heady rush
of being free
so far above the earth;
you will be balancing
so much more soon,
we must all be prepared.

Right now it is dizzying enough
to walk the ties
to watch bumble bees work dandelions
to peer at tiny green plants
through plastic walls
coated with moisture.

A square cement post is stuck
at the end of the yard.
I place you on it
so you can jump
with laughter
into my arms.

In a moment,
we will go to meet your mother.
Hand in hand,
your mother's friend
your mother's daughter.
Child, I have told you all I know
of the working of bees,
the mysteries of greenhouses,
the thrill of balance.
Now I will tell you something
strictly for me.

I need the words
just as you need my acts, my gestures.

Child,
what is happening to us
in this green and gold and blue April day
as we mark time
in a small space
runs deeper
than the furrows of all the gardens
of all the world.

Rosemary Klein

MOTHER

I am stripped of the necessity
for ritual. Now
that the hand that changed my diapers
is gloved; the hair that brushed my lotioned skin
is hatted.

I see you as vital, alive. The face that leaned close to me
to bring me close to my universe. That face is closed
to my universe. No longer supported by my father
or pensively by your hand, that face is lifted
up by glittering rhinestones at each ear.
The perfume is heavy behind the lobe, around
the shoulders; in each corner, the chairs are right;
they support the picture window; the kitchen
hums; the dining room nods in beige slumber;
the carpet finally extends from wall to wall.

I am hidden in the bathroom
afraid to move in the culmination of your vision;
trapped between tub and mirror
is a burning mirage clearly
it is your face, laughing and lit
in 1940; winding like a casual wind
of fall leaves against grey background;
it is your graduation picture;
graduation, graduation, the echo fades like
my smile against the tile. I am not you.

And I am sorry.
I move from the bathroom past
the klieg lights of your rhinestones, the dozen red roses
slashed across your lips;
I join the audience
and watch you
but you are not aware
and you do not
notice that in the end I am frightened.

I cannot clap; I cannot prolong the applause.

Rosemary Klein

WHAT I NEED

I pick up the down pillow
 fluff it
 put it down
 pick it up again
 my mind on last night
 the voices
 the anger and tears
 I wait for his call
 know
 when it comes
 and he rattles his list
 of complaints
 that night will begin again
 What I need is
 a compliment
 something really nice
 said to me
 to plump me up
 the way I do
 the down pillows
 before someone
 flattens them again

Sue Saniei Elkind

WIDOW

first it's like walking
 thru winter you
 see a chair but
 you see it thru
 a blur forget
 what to do in the
 morning how to
 lie down at night
 the leaves push
 under the door and
 you don't see them
 feel the cat slide up
 and down your leg
 where nothing
 else will the
 rest of your life
 is like a hill of ice
 and you're wearing
 ice shoes

lyn lifshin

DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

The new term seems too mild, somehow;
 It does not match that scalpel's edge, *divorce*.
 That's a cut, blood spurting,
 A chasm earthquake—ripped between flesh and flesh.
Dissolution is what sugar cubes do
 In the rain, a mild melting
 Without color or character.

And yet

That may be just the word to use
 For this, where each day makes less
 By imperceptible amounts the sweet taste
 Of love. *Erosion of marriage*
 Might be better still. Mild-mannered water
 Will do it every time, drop by drop,
 Till even the stones of the temple are worn away.

Lisa Yount

HOMAGE TO SAPPHO

Janine Canan

Sappho looks up. She's angry about the myths, "small and dark with unshapely wings", that wish to enclose her name. But she laughs, glowing like the evening. A pink and orange smile crosses the sky. She touches her wrinkles—warm like the sand, like the hillsides of Lesbos where bright oleander gush from the gullies, fingers of lavender and fragrant thyme. She touches those dry roads and sees herself strolling in a dusty dream, the seven-string lyre hanging at her side. Or weaving lithe as summer grass in the open square, song rising like a nightingale from the droning plane tree, where children scream and old men grimace.

A terror grips her. Is she that woman who runs after Phaon, tiny terrified man, to fling herself from White Cliff into Aegea's sparkling blue arms? Is she the midjet statue with the one wing; the one whose face is broken off; or the oiled white Romantic marble? In truth a strong swimmer, she dives and frolics like a dolphin, large head shining at the surface, shadow dodged by schools of flickering fish. Rules have not harmed her festive face. Her voice, rich and resonant, knows every stone and hollow of the scale. A natural traveller, she loves the warm air of the islands, smelly with vegetables and flowers. But she is banished from her home. Churchmen burn her manuscripts in

Constantinople, would have burned her at the stake, but she escapes. Mummies sleep in the rags of her poems. The red hydria, decorated with her fine dreaming face, stands empty.

She married, they say, was wealthy, and bore a daughter. But she can scarcely remember. They say she was a priestess, "holy and pure." But she remembers sitting in the temple dark: she listens. When the girls rush in like winds with their urgent wishes, she kneels and adores. They say she worshipped Aphrodite, and perhaps that is true. For there is one brown arm, warm and trembling, that pleases her as no other. Over it she runs her lips, night after night, to learn forever its familiar exquisite shape. Words, certain syllables, burning so powerfully in her mind no others can approach them. Alone she descends in the earth's deep lips, her bare foot gleaming. And at dawn her heart is filled with poems.

Sappho lowers her head, pale behind the slate-blue mountains. Gulls glide into the harbor, where her voice is lapping at the shore. Along the promenade couples preen and babble in a different Greek. In the courtyard two peacocks sigh in stone. The streets and libraries of ancient Eressos, the scrolls, lie buried under hills of crushed pottery, mosaicked in sand. Toward the horizon fish dive into the sea.

SAPPHO

610 B.C.

Judging even from the mutilated fragments fallen within our reach from the broken altar of her sacrifice of song, I for one have always agreed with all Grecian tradition in thinking Sappho to be beyond all question and comparison the very greatest poet that ever lived.—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

ODE TO APHRODITE

Deathless Aphrodite, throned in flowers,
Daughter of Zeus, O terrible enchantress,
With this sorrow, with this anguish, break my spirit,
Lady, not longer!

Hear anew the voice! O hear and listen!
Come, as in that island dawn thou camest,
Billowing in thy yoked car to Sappho
Forth from thy father's

Golden house in pity! . . . I remember:
Fleet and fair thy sparrows drew thee, beating
Fast their wings above the dusky harvests,
Down the pale heavens,

Lighting anon! And thou, O blest and brightest,
Smiling with immortal eyelids, asked me:
"Maiden, what betideth thee? Or wherefore
Callest upon me?

"What is here the longing more than other,
Here in this mad heart? And who the lovely
One beloved thou wouldst lure to loving?
Sappho, who wrongs thre?

"See, if now she flies, she soon must follow;
Yes, if spurning gifts, she soon must offer;
Yes, if loving not, she soon must love thee,
Howso unwilling . . ."

Come again to me! O now! Release me!
End the great pang! And all my heart desireth
Now of fulfillment, fulfill! O Aphrodite,
Fight by my shoulder!

(translated from the Greek by William Ellery Leonard)

PLAYING POST OFFICE

Lisa Ruffolo

I decided to take a walk after my mother's funeral. While rose leaves blew about the cemetery, sticking to headstones, and distant relatives wiped sweat and tears from their faces, I slipped away and headed for the park.

I walked the three miles in flimsy sandals and let a strong steady wind tangle my loosely braided hair. I passed houses where whistling men in Bermuda shorts hosed down little patches of lawn. Cutting through alleys, I saw summertough kids splashing in backyard pools, picking tiny green apples from shivering trees, and bouncing rubber balls off garage roofs. Everywhere, I heard the drone of lawn mowers.

At the edge of the park, I took off my black linen coat and tossed it into a wire trash can as if it were a basketball. Then I took off my sandals and rubbed my swollen feet. The leather had left red crisscrossed impressions in the skin. I strolled along, grass brushing my ankles, and looked for the peeling green bench near the swings. I thought of this particular bench as my own; I had been sitting on it in the evenings for the past few weeks, ever since my mother's illness forced her into the hospital. Before that we led a quiet life together, protecting each other. I went to school and told her selected news of the world; she worked at a department store and bought me sale items. We liked the same television programs. When she first grew sick, I dropped out of school to care for her. It was then that I began to visit the park and look for my special bench. While my mother and I lived together, it was unusual for me to insist on anything; but afterwards, I soon began to see the value in objects you could count on. I could always count on the bench.

Sometimes however, before a rainstorm for example, the park rangers would stack my bench near the pavilion, along with all the other park benches. Then I'd have to sort through them patiently until I found it. I'd quietly unstack all the benches piled on top of mine, and drag it through the grass to its proper place by the swings.

The day of my mother's funeral, I found the bench where I had left it. I settled myself down and began to watch. All of my favorite characters were there, clustered under the trees. Rita and Johnny seemed upset. Rita was tight-lipped and stiff, and her golden crucifix glinted in the late afternoon sun. Johnny moved his arms in wide arcs through the air, pleading and

explaining. It was always the same: a kiss at dusk would end it, and they would link arms, coo and flirt, sauntering down a dirt path.

But tonight Rita was crying, her face stained with pale streaks of tears, and Johnny only sat and picked at the grass, talking quietly, shrugging his shoulders. There was no reconciliation. Probably joined the army or lost his dishwashing job, I thought. Then the Bakers and their children tumbled by. Mrs. Baker's stomach swelled under her flowing paisley shift, and diapers spilled out of her oversize straw handbag. She waved to me as she trundled by. The Baker children, dressed in blue jeans and baseball jackets, scrambled onto the swings and squeaked down the slide, some on their stomachs, some on their heels or butts. Mr. Baker smoked a cigarette and yelled at the kids to stay away from the streets. Mrs. Baker sat on the edge of a picnic table and pushed her thin brown hair back with her fingers.

On a wobbly card table under the trees, three people played canasta and sipped iced tea. They sat on bright green aluminum lawn chairs. Mr. Dodson, an old man with a thin leathery face, raised his wrinkled hand to his straw hat, swatted his bare bony knee, and slapped his cards down in front of the chattering Franklin sisters. They both wore pale, polka-dotted crepe dresses and I could see their nylon hose rolled up just above their knees. After Mr. Dodson claimed a pile of toothpicks as his kitty, I heard him talk of his upcoming marriage. He was seventy-eight and marrying again, moving out to Arizona with his sixty-five year old bride. The Franklin sisters tittered, and coyly patted their tangled hair.

I leaned back in my bench and signed indulgently. Suddenly very weary, I closed my eyes and rubbed my temples with my fingertips. An image of my mother bubbled up. I could see her sitting at our white kitchen table, blowing cigarette smoke and laughing into the phone. I could see her trying to steer an old bicycle through suburban streets, balancing a bag of groceries in one hand. I was afraid things would collapse without her. My father had died when I was very young and my mother brought me up alone, always promising that no matter what happened, she would always be there. Her assurances soothed me, and I had a happy, easy childhood. She taught me how to find a husband: persistence, she said. When you grow older, and you start to date, you will learn that it is good to be patient and persistent. As I grew older and my mother grew sicker, I understood that the practice of this lesson would have to be delayed, and so, ex-

cept for a few brief affairs, I entered adulthood as a romantic novice.

As it grew dark, I rubbed my bare shoulders to keep warm and suddenly remembered cleaning out my mother's closets and drawers when she had first grown ill. I had found an embroidered wool shawl wrapped in disintegrating tissue paper, a collection of chipped, sculpted jade jungle animals, and soiled pink toe shoes in the bottom of a cedar chest. I had never seen any of these objects before. In a dresser drawer, under garter belts and girdles, I found an old can of Burma Shave and three mismatched cufflinks rolled into a black sock. When I shook the can, gray flecks of shaving cream sputtered out. I put all of these things into a large shopping bag and stored them in my room while my mother was in the hospital. She had always promised me a dowry.

Shivering now on the park bench, I watched Rita and Johnny finally surrender and kiss each other sadly. They walked off together, Rita's head on Johnny's shoulder, and stroked one another's knuckles. Mr. Dodson folded up his card table and stored it in the trunk of his Plymouth, then lurched off with the Franklin sisters. After Mr. Baker whistled sharply between his teeth to signal an end to his children's play, I strapped on my sandals and headed for home.

Even though it had been weeks since my mother had actually lived there, our house seemed different now that she was gone. The refrigerator buzzed loudly in the kitchen. Lamps took an extra second to light up after I flicked them on. Bills and newspapers fell off the tables. I went to the telephone and unplugged the cord. I was glad to be rid of the phone. I had stopped answering it in the early summer, when I thought the hospital would call with news of my mother's death. If I was making myself a sandwich or heating a pot of coffee and the phone rang, I'd go right on with the sandwich or coffee, as casual as I could be. I got so good I wasn't even sure I heard it when it rang, shrill and loud, and soon the calls dwindled off. My mother learned to call me in code, so I had kept it plugged in for her. Now I only had to use it in emergencies.

That night, I sat by the kitchen window and watched flying ants swarm on the lighted screen. I poured salt on the white formica table and divided the little piles with my finger, tracing stars and crosses in the crystals. Wheezing slightly, I found an old fan in the back closet and set it in the doorway, then turned it on. Air condi-

tioning irritated my sinuses. Later, I flipped through magazines and drew pictures of animals in the margins. When the sun came up, I made myself a thermos of iced tea and tried to smoke some cigarettes. Coughing, I headed back to the park.

Most of that week was like that: sleepless nights, pastoral days. It was only in the park that I felt I could breathe. But it was more than that; I knew that if I stayed there long enough, I would come to realize what I should do next. I went to the park everyday to reminisce and daydream and wait for clues.

It was during one of my afternoon reveries that I remembered Gerard. We had had a brief affair while he was going through the rigors of divorce. He suddenly stopped calling me in early May, but I was at the hospital with my mother in those days, and hardly noticed that he was gone. Now I remembered the one or two nights that we sat up, huddled together in the candlelight, and talked about mysticism and inexplicable coincidences. He did tests with playing cards and investigated possible UFO sightings. I knew he would understand what I was going through; he could tell me how to wait for signs. I found a crumpled handbill in a circle of bushes, smoothed it out on my lap, and decided to write him a letter.

I am going crazy with having to talk to you, I wrote to him. I hear chimes in my sleep, see needles in the clouds, feel the cold drool of ice on my toes. I thought that sounded pretty good, urgent and poetic. When the rumble of dreams has quieted, and I jerk myself to wakefulness each morning, slowly the fuzz clears, and, bright and shiny like silver insects, comes this churning desire to talk to you. I decided not to tell him about my mother's death or that I really hadn't slept in little over a week. We could talk about that when we got together. Along the borders of the handbill, I printed out my phone number and hours I would have the phone plugged in. I told him to use a special code—one short ring, then a series of long ones—when calling me. I put the letter into an envelope and drove slowly in the early morning fog to his house, wanting to be sure that he would get it that day. I placed it flat on his doormat, thinking he couldn't miss it there.

When I received no response from Gerard, I rechecked his address in the phone book. I had not made a mistake. Maybe the letter blew away, I thought.

I took my bicycle to the store and hunted the produce aisles for his favorite fruit, then hurried

over to his house before he got home from his parapsychology work. Drawing tools out of my leather purse, I drove a nail through the thick leaves of the pineapple and hung it on his door. A sap as thick as butterscotch dripped from its pulp. Three amber pearls formed on the wood and shook lazily when I wrote a note on the door and stuck it between the pineapple leaves. It was the same kind of thing—an urgent message and a phone number. I slipped a notepad back into my purse and cycled back home.

After four days and no word from him, I began to get frantic. I went back to his house to see if the pineapple was gone. Only its amber juice glistened on the door. If the pineapple was gone, I thought, why hasn't he called? Puzzled, I sat down on his steps and took out my notebook and pen. *Dear Gerard, I write, I am afraid of the summer. The wind in my hair leaves me numb and crazed. Slashes of sunlight poke at my eyes, and they are like raw eggs—they crack and bleed when I poke them. I try hard to stay away from mirrors, but we click together like magnets.* As I finished the letter, I remembered that Gerard was slightly famous, having appeared on local talk shows as a UFO expert. He was a handsome, tall, blond man, and his quiet passion and firm belief in another world gave him a kind of charisma. Maybe he thinks I'm some kind of fanatical follower, a bothersome groupie, I thought. Of course. I went to the drugstore and bought him a little plastic model space craft. I don't care about these things, I wrote on the box. I only care about you. I wrapped the package and letter in brown paper and sent them to him, through United Parcel. He was never home when I passed down his street, and he never called.

I actually did call him myself the day I thought I saw him in a shopping center. I was buying envelopes in a stationery store when I spied a blond man looking through birthday cards on a rack. A fourth-of-July mobile obscured his face, but when I saw a flying saucer on his T-shirt, I was sure it was Gerard. I followed him out of the card shop and through the crowds in the shopping mall. I nearly caught up to him on the escalator in Gimbel's, but lost him among the appliances. I searched through the power tools and home furnishings, then gave up. I went back to the stationery store and bought a card from the rack he had been looking at. When I got home, I mailed it to him. Then, because I had forgotten exactly what he looked like, I studied his picture again in my newspaper clippings. Later, I called his number, to see if he made it home, and listened to the phone ring and ring.

Like me, he probably didn't want to be bothered with the telephone, and so I gave up trying to call.

A short time after that, I sat on the damp stone ledge outside his office building. The sun glared off my bracelets and rings, and the wind riffled the papers in my lap. I checked to see that all of my mother's dowry was in the shopping bag at my feet. When I heard a high, shrill whistle, a rush of people rolled out of the doors. I checked my watch and sat very still, anxiously shredding the corners of my letters. I studied each tall blond man that came out of the building, but could not find Gerard in the crowd. Thinking he could have dawdled, I waited until the janitors locked the building for the night. I was getting desperate. It seemed as if a month had passed since I last slept; my eyes were cracked and sore around the edges. When the streetlights first started to glow, I left the ledge and walked across the bridge, throwing my letters and jewelry in the dark lake. I later sent Gerard a detailed list estimating the worth of the dowry and hoped he was a practical man.

The next day, I decided to return to the park. There I found the peeling green bench where I had left it. I considered it a good omen to find the bench in its spot by the bushes bordering the pond. Now it was really time to find Gerard. I was growing so thin that I had to wear old blouses from my pre-teen days. I wondered what kind of food Gerard liked. I remembered that he ate cold peas on the nights I was with him. That would never fatten me up.

I sat back in the bench and tried to think. I saw Rita and Johnny crouching in a sandbox. It had only been a couple of months since I last saw them quarreling in the park, but Rita's striped smock already hid her blossoming pregnancy. Maybe now she and Mrs. Baker could get to know one another, I thought, as the whole Baker clan wheeled by on tandems. Mrs. Baker's knees bumped her belly as she struggled along behind her husband, who hollered out directions to his children in front of them. Looking around to the other benches, I noticed the Franklin sisters fanning themselves with newspapers, seated next to two new beaux. All four wore straw hats and seemed to be playing some kind of word game. When I inquired, they told me Mr. Dodson had already left for Arizona.

I opened my purse and flipped through extra copies of the letters I had been writing to Gerard. I hadn't sent him all of them, only the better ones. I was sure that he liked good writing. In one of the newspaper photographs,

he was holding a copy of *The New Yorker*. I composed a whole series of letters in the park that day as I watched leaves and bits of colored paper float on the brown water of the pond. I decided to tell him all about my mother, how her death had changed things in me, made me more persistent. When I got home, I leafed through a dictionary to check all of the spellings and practiced reading the letters out loud to get the rhythm right.

Dear Gerard, please read this letter through to the end. Out on the streets, a fine drizzle is misting from the sky. It hangs there like a sheet of ice. I scratched words into its surface. It melts before you get them. You find the words anyway. They rush out of your faucets and stream from your shower. When you flush the toilet, they gurgle and spill on the tiles. Listen to the water.

Dear Gerard, where are you when I need you? I have made campfires outside your door, planted stones of turquoise and jade in the ground around your walk. I folded this letter and threw it in the lake. The words bled and ran together; they are jumbled and make no sense. I can't help it. God is not on my side. I haven't been to confession in ten years, and my mother is dead. She was my ticket to heaven.

Dear Gerard, I am going crazy with having to talk to you. Please, please, we must get together before my stomach ruptures. It drains golden bile incessantly. I am trying to purify myself for you. I light candles in your memory every night.

After what seemed months and seasons, I thought about giving up on the letter writing. Maybe he just doesn't have time to read, I thought. But I had to get in touch with him somehow; I hadn't slept for a full night since the day before my mother's funeral. I had never really become comfortable with not sleeping—it made the days stretch on and on like miles of slow river water. Still, I had accepted it and expected that some day I would find time to sleep. I liked to write the letters to Gerard at night. It was a new abstinence from food that worried me. The thought of food simply made me ill. Bread crumbled in my mouth and I had to spit it out because it was so dry. I decided I would try to call him again, only this time, I would use a new strategy.

I bought a mask at the Salvation Army retail store and wore it to the library. I didn't think anyone would recognize me there. I dialed his number nervously on the pay phones. A woman answered. I went back to the Salvation Army and returned the mask, explaining it was defective. I tried the phones again.

This time he answered. I whistled softly into the mouthpiece and listened to his voice as my heart thumped weakly in my chest. He sounded innocent, unruffled as he asked, "Hello, hello, hello?" until I think he finally realized it was me, and hung up with a grunt.

It was a pity I returned the mask, because Mrs. Baker and one of her brood saw me walking out of the library and, after staring at me for a full minute, recognized me with a shriek. In a moment, she was upon me, smoothing down my hair and asking me what was wrong, I looked like a corpse. I quickly glanced at her, surprised that she recognized me. When she tried to slide a piece of striped candy between my lips, I pushed her arm away and asked her to help me find Gerard. She took me to the hospital, smuggled in my notebooks and pens, and promised to bring Gerard to my room.

The day he finally came was a beautifully burning day in autumn. I had been eating and sleeping regularly for a few weeks, although I hadn't spoken to anyone since I was first checked in. I had even made some friends. Shanna, an obese, red-headed Irishwoman, taught me Gaelic riddles and joked about her suicide attempt. Stanley and KC, two black Vietnam veterans, played Monopoly and Risk at a table across from my bed. Once in a while, KC would start to twitch and go blank in the face. Then Stanley would run and get the Lithium and help him swallow the pill, holding a glass of water to his lips. Shanna thought there was something fishy going on between the two of them, but they seemed sweet and brotherly, and Stanley combed my hair for me once in a while, so I liked them both. And there was Trina and Katy and Jojo and Willy: I never had so many friends in my life. They all tried to get me to laugh or sing or say something, but I was waiting for the right time.

So when Gerard finally arrived that fall morning, I knew it was the right time. And when he came up to me in the day room and smiled awkwardly, I thought surely that I would speak then. But I just looked up at him and returned his awkward smile. I had nothing to say. He looked shorter and darker to me and I wasn't even sure it was really Gerard until I read his identification badge clipped to his pocket. I waited for the nurse to lead him out of the room before I said, "I was probably just wasting my time." Shanna laughed loudly and Stanley crowed while Trina ran to get a doctor. He found me throwing my notebooks away. I turned to him and said, "I would like to be released." It was only a matter of time before

they let me return to my mother's grave to say goodbye.

When I went back to the cemetery, I carried the jade animals and silk toe shoes with me. It was a cool morning, and I wore my mother's embroidered wool shawl around my shoulders. I thought at first that I would bury everything with her, then reconsidered and decided it would be more appropriate to store them with the shaving cream and cufflinks. I did dig a hole for the letters, and even placed them down in the moist dirt. But I changed my mind again at the last minute, and pitched them into a wire trash can instead.

Later that fall, I sold the house and moved to an apartment. I continued to take my customary evening walks. Back in the park, Johnny held Rita's hand as she waddled past the swings. He cut his hair, wore button-down shirts and looked years older. Mrs. Baker discreetly nursed her newborn in the station wagon while her other children skittered through fallen leaves and chased sailing footballs. She slipped me paper bags filled with cheese sandwiches and fried chicken wrapped in foil when her husband wasn't looking. I received an invitation to the Franklin sisters' double wedding and shopped for an appropriate dress after work. On weekends, I chatted briefly with Gerard's new wife when I saw her with the other pregnant women in the park. She told me that Gerard gave up his independent research to take a position with the government. I told her that I had a new job as a local correspondent for a major magazine. When she spoke out strongly about local issues, I encouraged her to write letters to the editor.



TYING MAW'S QUILT

Colleen Tracy

One summer day in 1935, Esther and Maw were going to tie a quilt they were making. Vic was hanging around the house, so it must have been a July day when the corn was laid by and the oats weren't ripe yet and it was too hot to fish. But Maw decided it was as good a day as any to do the job.

It was a necessity quilt that they spread out on the livingroom floor; the front invented from scrap ends left over from Esther's dressmaking ventures; the back from flour sacks, boiled, then bleached in the sun; the batting from another quilt whose covering had worn out.

The quilts Esther and Maw made weren't works of art; they weren't the painstakingly, pieced-by-hand, double wedding rings or Bethlehem stars, hand quilted on a frame with eight-to-the-inch running stitches that the neighbors packed in cedar chests and displayed when company came but seldom used. Maw had no time or inclination to make such quilts. Maw's quilts were sturdy, yarn-tied affairs, checkerboard or crazy quilt patterns, relatively quick to make and in great demand on winter nights when the fires, so carefully banked, still burned out before morn-

ing.

This day, as soon as chores were done, the two women spread newspapers over the rug in the livingroom, smoothed out the backing laid the wool batting over that, and finally the top. Esther had spent most of yesterday pressing flat the myriad seams of that top with sad irons, running between the kitchen, where the irons were heating on the cookstove, and the diningroom, where the ironing board had been set up. All the while she had to stoke the fire, because Maw was working in the garden. It took the concentration of an alchemist to juggle those several irons to the right temperature. Oh, how the sweat had rolled down her face! In the end, she'd been too exhausted to help with the milking and had laid on the cot on the porch, a wet cloth over her aching head.

But, today, they'd finish the quilt, or at least get all the ties in and the binding pinned on. The two women, on hands and knees, starting in the middle of the quilt, ran long basting stitches to the four corners, then across and lengthwise. When the three layers were welded together, they began to insert the yarn ties at the corners of each square.

The repetitious hand movements, the morning coolness (for the sun had not gotten around to the livingroom windows yet), and the sense of accomplishing something put the women in a pleasant mood. But neither Maw nor Esther were used to sitting on the floor, and groaned ruefully when they shifted positions.

When they had spread the quilt parts over all the open space on the livingroom floor, they had left Vic in the diningroom drinking coffee and reading his *Actual/Factual/True Detective* magazines. Now he stood in the doorway, hands tucked in the back pockets of his bib overalls, watching them, a glowering expression on his face. After awhile Maw asked, "Do you want something?"

"Well," he said, "I was going to sit on the porch, but I see a guy can't get through here."

"Why don't you go out the kitchen door," Esther asked, smartly, "and walk around to the porch?"

Vic turned on his heel, muttering under his breath. They heard the kitchen screen door slam and returned to their work, threading their darning needles, making the vertical stabs through

the three thicknesses of material, tugging the needle and yarn sharply, tying the square knots, a seemingly endless sea of knots.

Sometime later, they heard Vic open the porch door and settle himself in the rocking chair. Every few minutes he got up, held open the screen, and spit his stream onto the grass. They knew he was in his grumbling bear mood. They knew if he'd had any money, he would have walked to town to dilute his boredom over the pool table. But there was no money until after the oats were harvested, and little then.

The three mile walk to town was as nothing to Victor; he was so used to it. Once they'd had a 1920 Buick; Paw had bought it; and though he'd never learned to drive it, he'd made sure the auto had been well kept up. But after Paw died in '23, Vic had sole care of it. When it was past repair, Vic, in a rage, ran it down the hill and into the lake; and there it sat. The tires and wooden-spoked wheels sank into the mud, the cloth top flapped in the wind for awhile, until piece by piece it flew away. Each year the old car sat lower in the water; eventually, it was only a frame for the turtles to sun themselves upon; then this, too, crumpled into rust and disappeared.

"When we gonna have dinner?" Vic stood in the doorway between the porch and livingroom, pocket watch in his hand. "It's 12:35, now."

"Oh, dear," sighed Maw. "I wanted to finish this quilt before noon."

"We've only got two rows of ties to go," said Esther. "It's a shame to stop."

"Victor," said Maw, "would you start the meal, please? All you have to do is fry the bacon and

potatoes. We'll come and dish up as soon as we're done, here."

"Me, cook?" Vic asked, in a shocked voice. "You want me to cook dinner?"

"Well, son, it would be a big help. There's cold, boiled potatoes in a bowl in the pantry and the bacon's in a crock in the cellar. Bring up a jar of beans and some sauce, too, while you're there."

A pause ensued while Vic opened the screen to spit. The women knew he was thinking it over.

"Okay," he said. "I'll do it this time, but don't think it's gonna be a habit."

Esther and Maw exchanged grins and began tying faster. They heard him enter the kitchen and start the fire in the range, bang the heavy frying pan on the stove, and clump down the stairs to the cellar. They became absorbed in their work, again, until the odor of scorching potatoes jarred them like a nasty pin prick.

Maw staggered to her feet, her knees stiff from the hours on the floor. She hobbled to the kitchen, Esther following. There Vic was scraping with a table knife in the frying pan where six, large potatoes (he hadn't sliced them) were stuck fast to the bottom. In another pan, grease spat and bubbled around a few shrivelled slices of blackened bacon. Toward the rear of the red-hot stove, the coffee pot was boiling over.

"Thank you, Victor," said Maw, in a carefully calm voice. "I'll take over." He stepped aside, his expression as placid as the summer day.

"Did you finish your old quilt?" he asked.

"Not quite," she answered, "but we decided to quit, anyway."

THE HEALING ART OF POETRY AS THERAPY

Deborah Eve Grayson, C.P.T.

Poetry as a therapeutic tool has been used since the days of Apollo, the Greek God of poetry and medicine, but in the past ten years or so poetry therapy gained major recognition as an essential dimension in the treatment of emotional disorders. Of course one need not be suffering from an emotional problem in order to receive the benefits of poetry therapy. The use of poetry can be beneficial to all people and on all levels.

Poetry works so effectively and quickly because all people *feel*, but the ability to express those feelings can be threatening or frightening. Poetry guides the unconscious in bringing hard to express or hidden feelings to the surface in a non-judgmental environment. The poem acts as the "understanding someone" to whom a person can relate. This is called the isoprinciple: a poem corresponds to the emotion being expressed at a particular time. Through this technique, a person having difficulty in expressing an emotion relates to the poet and realizes that they are not alone in the way they feel. Thus alienation, so much a contributing factor to mental illness, is alleviated. The poem also provides a means for the person to objectify his feelings—begin talking about herself in an indirect way which opens the door to communication. Ultimately there is a resolution to the conflict. Through discussion of feelings, catharsis and self-realization take place.

The type of poetry used corresponds to the individual or group needs. With young children, nursery rhymes and children's songs as well as poetry by Shel Silverstein or Kenneth Koch might prove effective. Adolescents respond to popular songs about the difficulties of growing up. The elderly might relate well to patriotic or Broadway tunes or classics such as Shakespeare or Whitman—poets they might have studied in school. With elderly persons who are experiencing memory loss, it may slowly bring them back to the present. The type of poetry used is not as important as the feeling elicited: to reach into the well of emotion and bring it to the surface where it can be confronted.

Poetry therapy is being used in hospitals, schools, prisons, halfway houses, drug rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, mental health clinics, as well as in private practice. Poetry breaks down communication barriers where

other methods have failed. People who obtain better self-knowledge improve their total life-adjustment. Poetry therapy is used in group settings as well as individually and for the physically and emotionally limited population, as well as "neurotic normals."

What might one expect to see in a group poetry therapy session? This depends on the individual clients the techniques that the therapist might employ.

While working at United Cerebral Palsy, some clients hinted at their fear of death—the loss of a parent, as well as their own deaths. Instead of running from the problem or sweeping it under the carpet, I devised a session to help bring these emotions to the surface. I began with quotations on the topic, some serious and others light in tone, but all served as "jumping off points" for further discussion. Examples:

The goal of all life is death.

*If there's another world, he lives in bliss,
If there is none, he made the best of this.*

*Here lies my wife,
here let her lie!
Now she's at rest,
and so am I!*

The group began to talk about which quote or short poem impressed them and why. Everybody's ideas were heard and given a response. Some expressed their fears immediately. Some began to cry because they had recently lost a loved one and had not yet been able to complete the grief process and accept the loss. All were able to identify with one another and asked if they could write a group poem. Every person offered a line to the poem until they felt it was complete. They decided to write their own epitaphs first:

*Here lies me, here lies I,
I accomplished what I could,
And I never said die.*

*Here lies a man with a heart of gold,
He helped other people
in ways untold.*

Instead of the sadness that one might expect in such an exercise, I found the complete opposite. Their epitaphs revealed a sense of humor, feelings of self-worth, determination and achievement. We explored the topic until the fears and confusion on death were alleviated to the point where normal life functions could begin again. Of course, it may often take several sessions to accomplish this, in which case other poems and therapeutic art forms are used.

Sometimes clients bring in their own poetry to share with the group. It is not important how good the poem is or how grammatically correct. Again, the focus is on getting the emotion out and then working toward a resolution to the difficulty. Usually a writer feels self-satisfaction when a poem is completed knowing something both tangible and important has been created. They have accomplished something worthwhile.

I Am

*I am a toddler taking steps through life,
I am a seed waiting to be watered so I can grow,
I am a tank going wherever I want and no one can
stop me,
I am a fire burning inside,
I am laughter - I come out when people least expect
me,
I am a star who's wandering far.*

Each line of the poem was discussed briefly. I would interject questions such as, "What makes you feel like a fire burning inside?" "What made you identify with the tank—who's trying to stop you?" "When was the last time you laughed?" etc.

Another popular technique I have used is "I wish . . ." This was written by a young woman with a learning disability.:

Help

*I wish I could be of help
where help is needed sometimes,
At school, at home,
When things go wrong
this is where help belongs.*

We all need to feel needed, loved and accepted for the unique individuals we are. Poetry therapy allows us to express and explore who we are and what our capabilities as productive human beings might be. It is through the road to the unconscious that we begin to understand and know ourselves. Poetry is one of those special roads.

YOUR HANDS

Your hands are lace curtains
on the window of my back
fingers like the tide
rolling toward my spine
leaving tender tip prints
in the sand of my skin
as my back bows down
to drink you in

Deborah Eve Grayson

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Associations and Groups

- A. The Association for Poetry Therapy, Beverly Bussolati, O.T.R. Secretary 1029 Henhawk Road, Baldwin, New York 11510.
- B. Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 186 West 4th St. New York, N.Y. 10003. (Supplies curriculum material, pamphlets, newsletters—of particular interest: *The Whole Word Catalogue*.)
- C. The BiblioTherapy Discussion Group, an activity of the American Library Association is open to membership. For more info, write: BiblioTherapy Discussion Group, Exec. Sec., ASLA/HRLSD, American Library Assoc., 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, Illinois 60611.
- D. The BiblioTherapy Round Table, Arleen Hynes, Program Coordinator, 3217 N. Pershing Drive, Arlington, Va. 22201. Proceedings: meetings 3, 4 & 5 are available at 50¢, \$3.50, respectively.
- E. In order to receive a complete bibliography of Poetry Therapy (book-length) you may write to Dr. Franklin M. Berry, Department of Psychology, Columbus College, Columbus, Georgia 31907.

This introductory bibliography has been compiled by Sherry Reiter, C.P.T. Director of Certification, A.P.T., and Arleen Hynes, Director of BiblioTherapy Training Program, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C.

MERCY OTIS WARREN

Alis Ellis



Mercy Otis Warren

The author wishes to express sincere thanks to Jim Laukes for piquing her curiosity about . . . Mercy Otis Warren

Intellectual
Correspondent
Egalitarian
Satirist
Playright
Political Activist
Anti-federalist
Historian

. . . But what did she eat for breakfast?

Barnstable, Massachusetts, 1728.

On the Lord's day . . .

If you worked or played games you were fined 15 shillings. If you travelled you were fined 30 shillings. Presumably no fine was imposed for having babies on the Lord's day. Mercy Otis was born in a birthing room off a warm kitchen on September 25 of that year and for breakfast on that day she turned to her mother.

How does one best write about a woman conspicuous for liberty, equality and knowledge—a woman who was involved with our own forebears over 200 years ago? With amazement, respect, and a straight forward approach used to capture the spirit of a revolutionary whose name deserves to be in boldface type in all of our American history books. Where best to publish said writing? In a creative woman's publication, since she was one, and as soon as possible—she's waited long enough. Why do it? Because the years have not changed the obscurity accorded women's accomplishments. To whom should the writing be addressed?

Dear Mercy,

It's so exciting to meet an inspiring role model, a new kindred spirit. Though things have changed some over the years, women are still relegated culturally and by law to assigned societal roles. Would that your friend Abigail Adams had pushed a little harder in her admonishment to her husband to "not forget the ladies" in our constitution!

I've been reading your farce, *The Group*, two biographies of your life, and excerpts from your three-volume *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed With Biographical and Moral Observations*.

There are many of us still who never travel far outside our home province, who juggle creativity, learning and marriage and family responsibilities as a matter of course, and who yet endeavor to influence and incite change, as you did. It is exhilarating to have the historical silence broken, to meet you at last. There are those of us today who are finding, as you did, new potentials within ourselves during our middle and senior years.

Your biographers say that your plays were written to be read, were never produced, because of stringent blue laws imposed in Boston at the time. There were no theatres, they say. What a shame! Were I inclined toward theatre production I'd attempt to produce your plays in tribute. I understand, though, that your writings were printed in newspapers and distributed as pamphlets and were very popular and avidly read and that your history sold very well indeed.

I envied your friendships with Abigail Adams, Catharine MacCaulay, Hannah Winthrop, Elizabeth Adams . . . your Plymouth fireside gatherings with John Hancock, Sam and John Adams, Jonathan Mayhew . . . I commiserated with you in your family losses and personal disappointments . . . in the plagiarizing of your

works . . . I exulted with you in your vindications . . . in your interactions with George and Martha Washington and Thomas Jefferson . . . I admired, pictorially, your accomplished needlework, recognizing the meticulous hours spent over it . . . I applauded your adherence to your beliefs, even in the face of alienation from treasured friends like John Adams . . . I trembled with you in the intransigence of having children living overseas, apart from you, in a time of war . . . of being daughter, sister, wife, friend of people under warrant of the king . . . I lauded your activism and alacrity throughout your long and always productive life . . . and most of all, your networking with and encouragements to women—your mentoring. I quote directly your letter to a friend:

"Dear Betsy, (you write)
I dare say the good old sage you mention in support of your opinion would (with all his philosophy or stoicism) at any time gladly have exchanged his furious Xantippe for a wise and judicious Cornelia, a constant and prudent Portia, or a gentle condescending Octavia. But the recollection of these illustrious ladies naturally leads me to observe on that part of your letter in which you seem hurt by the general aspersions so often thrown on the understanding of ours by the illiberal part of the other sex. I think I feel no partiality on the female side but what arises from a love of justice, and freely acknowledge we too often give occasion (by an eager pursuit of trifles) for reflections of this nature. Yes, a discerning and generous mind should look to the origin of the error and when that is done I believe it will be found that the deficiency lies not so much in the inferior contexture of female intellects as in the cultivation of the mind in the early part of life; if it is neglected in either sex, we see ignorance, stupidity, and ferocity of manners equally conspicuous in both.

It is my opinion that that part of the human species who think nature . . . has given them the superiority over the other mistake their own happiness when they neglect the culture of reason in their daughters, while they take all possible methods of improving it in their sons . . .

The pride you feel on hearing reflections indiscriminately cast on the sex is laudable, if any is so. I take it, it is a kind of conscious dignity that ought rather to be cherished, for while we own the appointed subordination (perhaps for the sake of order in families) let us by no means acknowledge such an inferiority as would check the ardour of our endeavors to equal in all mental accomplishments the most masculine heights, that when these temporary distinctions subside we may be equally qualified to taste the full draughts of knowledge and happiness

prepared for the upright of every nation and sex" (reference 2, PP 187-188.)

The conditions for women in my century have improved somewhat, Mercy. We have suffrage. We attend school. We are more prominent in political office, business, the wage-earning workforce. We are less prone to think activism, fame and recognition unwomanly. But though the "temporary distinctions" have indeed subsided, they are not obliterated. Our constitution does not yet "remember the ladies" and we often weary of the battle and don't conspire to use our votes effectively. Meeting a role model like you rekindles our spirit and forges and tempers our determination that it shall not be another 200 years before equal rights become reality.

It's been a pleasure to meet you, Mercy Otis Warren. I eagerly look forward to further perusal of your works, your life, your time.

Respectfully,

Alis Ellis

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Mercy Otis Warren . . .

As a child was taught by her uncle, Reverend Jonathan Russell, studied Pope, Dryden, Milton, Shakespeare, Raleigh and all current print materials.

Third of 13 children (7 survived childhood), eldest girl.

Was not excluded from gatherings when her father, presiding judge of the circuit court, opened his house to those who wished to talk politics and consult with him.

Enjoyed a close companionship and intellectual comradeship with her brother James Otis (known as the patriot).

Was frequently at Watertown during 1775 and 1776 because her husband was speaker of the Massachusetts house and paymaster of the Army. Mercy was hostess there to Benjamin Franklin, George and Martha Washington, General Charles Lee, General Gates, Mrs. Putnam and others. She entertained in the house rented for council meetings and for her husband and other officials and visitors.

Began "introductory observations" of her history at Watertown, finished and published in 1805.

Stood on a hill with Abigail Adams and watched the British leave Boston without a fight.

Rode with Martha Washington to see the burned ruins of Charlestown.

Joined with her husband James and Abigail Adams and her children and others at Abigail's uncle's house in Boston for smallpox inoculation. Each patient was required to bring his own straw bed (later destroyed) two sheets, a counterpane, 18 shillings a week for board, and a guinea for the doctor. Abigail also drove a cow into town. Here Abigail received a letter from John

that "a resolution was passed . . ." (Our declaration of independence)

Joined Martha Washington (who later stayed at Valley Forge too) in visiting the military camp at Watertown where the Washingtons and the Warrens exchanged dinner invitations.

Kept in close touch with other women left alone by war, especially Abigail Adams and Elizabeth Adams (Samuel's wife), sending needles, cloth, shoes, back and forth in times of shortages.

Brother Samuel Allyne Otis was secretary to the senate, administered the oath of office to George Washington; son James served on the American ship Alliance and lost a leg to the revolution; son Winslow (her favorite) was a wastrel and dandy for whom she entreated favors; son George died alone and far away in Maine.

Wondered if writing in her styles was unseemly for a woman and needed (and got) much reassurance.

Entreated John Adams in their very senior years to rescue the author of "The Group," which the Boston Athenaeum was attributing to Mr. Samuel Barrett. John wrote a personal certification that it was hers on the last leaf of the pamphlet stored in that institution.

Lost her eyesight, but retained her curiosity throughout her life - she would reread Newton, order a book on Hindu mythology, ask for a passionflower, turning winter into summer with a "glass house."

Fought tyranny. Among her last words of advice to future generations:

"The people may again be reminded, that the elective franchise is in their own hands; that it ought not to be abused, either for personal gratifications, or the indulgence of partisan acrimony." (Reference 3, P 321.)

Imperfect, moralistic, human—in a grand manner.

Mercy Otis Warren.

ONE WRITER'S BEGINNINGS

by Eudora Welty
Harvard University Press, 1984

Carolyn Carmichael

In April of 1983 Eudora Welty delivered three lectures to inaugurate the William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in The History of American Civilization at Harvard University. Whether or not to anyone's surprise—but certainly to the Harvard Press's gratification—this book, based on the lectures, is now a best seller. It is being lauded on the air, in journals, in ads, and all without this lady having been enticed onto the talk shows—a most unlikely possibility in any case. But do not be shy of the best seller label in this instance. It is a lovely book, in the quality of the writing and in the gently amused reticence with which the author tells the story of her life; to this reviewer it is most admirable, however, in the manner with which Miss Welty probes the sources of her art without a shadow or pretension.

Eudora Welty is of course a famous writer of the "Southern School," author of many short stories and five novels. (The stories recently have been collected in one volume by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.) To be a Southern writer is clearly to have an intense sense of place, of time and history, whatever latitude of style and content may be involved, and one wonders if this is becoming a vanishing possibility in America where our cities look and feel more and more alike and people drift among them. Eudora Welty was born, grew up, spent most of her life and still lives in the family home in Jackson, Mississippi. The subject of the book truly is one writer's beginnings. We hear about the grandparents and their forebears in Ohio and West Virginia, about the father and mother with their difficulties of temperament and strengths and then their deaths, and most of all about her childhood and youth with two younger brothers. It was a comfortably well-off family living in a capital city.

The book begins charmingly with a recollection of sitting on the stairs, a very young child, putting on shoes while listening to an early morning duet of whistling and song between mother in the kitchen and father upstairs. "Listening" is the key word, and she goes on to tell of how keenly she listened for stories coming out of the talks of older people. Not for some time did she realize that it was "the everyday lies and stratagems" in this talk that were in fact the

basis of the scenes she so loved to hear about. And then, she says, "My instinct—the dramatic instinct—was to lead me eventually on the right track for a storyteller: The scene was full of hints, pointers, suggestions, and promises of things to find out and know about human beings. I had to grow up and learn to listen for the unspoken as well as the spoken—and to know a truth, I also had to recognize a lie." This quotation is one of a few instances where the autobiographical narrative is interrupted by comment. It is her art to use incident and story, the specific rather than the general, to point the quality and direction of attention which, beginning very early, formed the basis of her creative imagination. One might itemize as ingredients in the growth of a writer such things as reading, listening, watching, but this would mean little compared to what comes through so strongly in this book: the savoring, immediately and in memory, of quite ordinary experience. How this was transmuted into the ability to enter imaginatively into the lives of a considerable range of created characters compounded of whatever bits and pieces of observation, bound together so that they are in turn knowable people, is not to be explained. Creation remains mystery.

Nevertheless, reading the stories one would have to infer that behind the quietly and often humorously related experiences in this autobiography lay perceptions not explicated. There are hints, as in a passage Miss Welty quotes from one of her own early stories. A young girl is the subject: "When a person, or a happening, seemed to me not in keeping with my opinion or even my hope or expectations, I was terrified by a vision of abandonment and wildness which tore my heart with a kind of sorrow. My father and mother, who believed that I saw nothing in the world which was not strictly coaxed into place like a vine on our garden trellis to be presented to my eyes, would have been badly concerned if they had guessed how often the weak and inferior and strangely turned examples of what was to come showed themselves to me." And then there is this provocative sentence from a late story called "No Place For You, My Love": "A thing is incredible, if ever, only as it is told—returned to the world it came out of." Such untold things in their oddity, shame, perhaps horror, probably lie in everyone's memory. Miss Welty frequently drags them out of her characters.

In the last chapter, called "Creating a Voice," Miss Welty essays some rather more analytic perceptions of herself as writer. She is insistent

that her characters are not portraits, or—except in the most minimal sense—projections of herself. “My temperament and my instinct had told me alike that the author who writes at his own emergency remains, and needs to remain, at his private remove. I wished to be, not effaced, but invisible—actually a powerful position.”

Retrospectively however she finds a partial identity with one of the characters in “The Golden Apples” collection: “What I have put into her is my passion for my own life work, my own art. Exposing yourself to risk is a truth Miss Eckhart and I had in common . . . Not in Miss Eckhart as she stands solidly and almost opaquely in the surround of her story, but in the making of her character out of my most inward and deeply feeling self, I would say I have found my voice in fiction.” (Interestingly, Miss Eckhart *says* almost nothing.)

This last chapter is most eloquent in praise of memory—“our inward journey that leads us through time—forward or back, seldom in a straight line, most often spiraling.” The great confluence that is the individual human memory is her most dearly regarded treasure in life as in work.

The last sentences: “As you have seen, I am writer who came of a sheltered life. A sheltered life can be a daring life as well. For all serious daring starts from within.”



Jaime Cron

The Poetry Center Annual Benefit Denise Levertov



Monday, May 7, 8:00pm
at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Columbus Drive and Jackson Boulevard
Admission: \$5.00

DENISE LEVERTOV READING/A REVIEW

Margaret Brady

She has been described as "a valiant fighter for peace, a staunch defender of the human race."

Denise Levertov is a poet who voice rises up against the lunacy of nuclear war, the sadness of nature's destruction, the desolation of survival.

"All good poetry is political," Levertov believes. Speaking recently for the Poetry Center's annual benefit reading at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Levertov was, indeed, her most cap-

tivating when reading some of her latest works—"political" poems, poems about the things that concern her deeply.

Things like the environment, the earth: "Isn't it we who brought this terror upon her?"

Things like the "age of terror" we live in now:

"Mother, father, I have longed for you.

Now I see it is well you are dead. . .

No pulsations of passionate rhetoric
will suffice in this time. . . we stammer in
stammering dread. . .

Shall we—we and our kindred,
animal, vegetable. . .

Shall they, shall we by our own hand,
undo our own being, their being?"

She is unrelenting in her condemnation of nuclear power and weaponry:

"The Pentagon wants to know
what a *child* can tell it:
It *hurts* to burn. . .
They're in hell,
and they in it,
dead in their lives. . .
What can redeem them?
What can redeem them?

In 1940 Levertov wrote a poem about war ("Listening to Distant Guns"), and she is still writing about the tragedy of military conflicts. In 1982 she wrote "Thinking about El Salvador."

"I have to keep updating it. Unfortunately, I would like to see it become obsolete," Levertov noted during her reading.

But, *unfortunately*, writing like Levertov's will never become obsolete as long as there is horror in the world, in this "age of terror" we live in.

And it is that dread, that terror about which Levertov writes most eloquently, especially in "Candles in Babylon," the title poem from one of her latest books:

"Through the midnight streets of Babylon
Between the steel towers of their arsenals,
between the torture castles with no windows,
we race by barefoot, holding tight
our candles, trying to shield
the shivering flames, crying
'Sleepers Awake'
hoping
the rhyme's promise was true,
that we may return
from this place of terror
home to a calm dawn and
the work we had just begun."

In the excerpt from "Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus," Levertov writes again about the "terror":

"We live in terror
of what we know:
death, death, and the world's
death we imagine
and cannot imagine,
we who may be
the first and the last witness.

We live in terror
of what we do not know,
in terror of not knowing,
of the limitless, through which freefalling
forever, our dread
sinks and sinks,
or

of the violent closure of all.

Yet our hope lies
in the unknown,
in our unknowing,
O deep, remote unknown,
O deep unknown,
Have mercy upon us."

What better plea for peace, for saving the world from nuclear disaster could be found than in the lyrical verse of a poet like Levertov? And still, she is a poet whose vision stretches beyond the terror to a place where there is still hope—hope for a world where flowers can still grow, where people can live in peace.

From "Beginners" (Dedicated to the memory of Karen Silkwood and Eliot Gralla),

"But we have only begun
to love the earth.

We have only begun
to imagine the fullness of life.
How could we tire of hope?
—so much is in bud.
How can desire fail?

—we have only begun
to imagine justice and mercy
only begun to envision
how it might be
to live as siblings with beast and flower,
not as oppressors.

. . . So much is unfolding that must
complete its gesture,
so much is in bud."

We need voices like Denise Levertov's in this "age of terror" we're now moving through. Voices of hope, quiet voices that remind us of our common humanity, our common struggle for survival, and our need for peace.

A FEELING FOR THE ORGANISM: THE LIFE AND WORK OF BARBARA MCCLINTOCK

by Evelyn Fox Keller
W.H. Freeman and Co. 1983

Carolyn Carmichael

There is a great pleasure in reading this book—a double pleasure: that of learning something of the life of an extraordinary woman, and one of another sort, that of learning a great deal about the growth of the science of genetics which has been the larger part of the life of Barbara McClintock. For anyone interested in science, professionally or not, there is the further illumination of what the author calls in her preface “the interaction—sometimes complex, always subtle—between individual creativity and communal validation.”

This last consideration, before Barbara McClintock won the Nobel Prize this year, was what led the author of this biography *cum* explanation of scientific method, to undertake the book. Evelyn Fox Keller is herself a rather extraordinary woman. She was trained in theoretical physics and molecular biology. She has worked in mathematical biology and in the history, philosophy, and psychology of science. She is professor of mathematics and humanities at Northeastern University and is well known for her contributions to *Working It Out*, a “seminal work on professional women.” The right credentials, certainly, when accompanied by her sympathetic, imaginative intelligence.

McClintock disparaged the idea that her life experience could be of any particular value to women because she was too anomalous, too much a maverick. She had never married, never wanted to, and in old age could still not “understand” marriage, could not see why one should need to be committed to another person. This was only one aspect of her being “too different.” As an infant she already showed signs of being self-sufficient and as a child knew what she wanted to do and how she wanted to do it. Her parents, father a physician, mother a musician, were independent-minded New Englanders with an unusual capacity for responding to the individuality and specific needs of their children. They did not permit homework and sometimes permitted long absences from school when there



Barbara McClintock

seemed to be too much stress. Barbara's mother was perhaps concerned about her intensity and love of solitude but not about her being a tomboy. However, she did balk at the idea of college, fearing that the girl would become "a strange person, a person that didn't belong to society", perhaps a college professor. Keller also quotes McClintock as saying that during high school she had to think through "how I could handle my difference" and found it not easy. "I found that handling it in a way that other people would not appreciate because it was not the standard conduct might cause me great pain, but I would take the consequences...for the sake of an activity that I knew would give me great pleasure." And take the consequences she did, with great constancy throughout her life. Keller stresses two aspects of her character that were evident from the beginning and were at the root of her ability to lead the life she did: the capacity to be alone and the capacity for total absorption.

Fortunately her father was in favor of college and she went to Cornell. It was heaven, she said, a marvelous time of making friends, having dates, being Freshman Women's class president, throwing herself into work. Probably the closest thing to "normal" life in her experience. She played tenor banjo with a jazz improvisation group. Nevertheless her "difference" reasserted itself when as a junior she was invited by a professor to take his graduate course in genetics. She knew that this was where she wanted to be and stayed. There came a group of young men (George Beadle among them) all fascinated by maize genetics. On the book jacket there is a picture of them with Emerson, the professor, all dressed for work in the corn breeding field—McClintock diminutive in knickers. It was a great time: within a few years McClintock wrote papers of fundamental significance to the field, was widely recognized as being most able—some thought her a genius—but when Beadle, Rhoads, and the others went off to become professors she stayed behind. For some time she was not concerned about career as such but there did come a time when she needed a job and there were problems. There were fellowships and then one five-year academic appointment with *never a raise in rank*. She was not good at undergraduate teaching, not interested in academic politics, indifferent to rules and regulations and institutional comportment. Only her own work was important to her. She felt she had a choice between being "a lady or a maverick" so she was a maverick with a quick wit, a sharp tongue and a superior mentality; a combination that, along

with her sex, was not to be readily accommodated in academe in the mid '30s.

It must be stressed that she was very highly esteemed by professionals in her field many of whom tried to help her find a place to work. In the early '40s she became president of the Genetics Society of America and the third woman ever to be elected to the National Academy of Science. In 1941 she was offered a place in Cold Spring Harbor which was endowed by the Carnegie Institution as the Station for Experimental Evolution, and is there still. Crowded with visiting scientists in the summer, cold and rather isolated the rest of the year, it proved to be a good place for her to work as she wanted to work.

At this point biography, slim to begin with, becomes a strand in the history of genetics in the past forty years. Very briefly: genetic study had been based on cytology (the microscopic study of the cell) in *Drosophila*, in maize, in bacteria; genes were postulated, the role of DNA determined, and then came the revolution of Watson and Crick's discovery of the structure of DNA. Microbiology was born. The study of genetics shifted from the area of the naturalists and botanists to that of the chemists and physicists. The shift can be thought of as one away from qualitative study of individual subjects involving not only the morphology but the specific development of the organism to the quantitative techniques of mathematics and physics. Great things have been accomplished, as we all know, since the double helix model was demonstrated. A dogma developed: the genes strung like beads on the chromosome were unalterable—they could act but not be acted upon. McClintock stayed with the corn and cytogenetics.

Increasingly isolated she worked for years on her most difficult and important experiments to prove the existence of "transposition" within the chromosome, meaning roughly, that the positions and activities of genes were subject to control by factors within the cell. The implications of this were so contrary to the "dogma" and her experimental methods so far outside the current mode that when she tried to present this work she was simply not understood at all. Why she was not comprehended is the matter of deepest interest to Keller as she explores aspects of the question: communication, the "worlds of discourse that operate to shape the growth of specific areas of research by demarcating them from others." The discourse of microbiology was far removed by this time from cytogenetics and

it is possible that McClintock did not work hard enough at making herself understood—her presentations were dense and very difficult to follow. But more to the point is the question of ways of knowing. McClintock knew every corn plant she grew as an individual, studied every kernel by *seeing* what was going on in it. She could teach a student to see as she saw but when this way of knowing was no longer the mode of her science, she could not verbally persuade the scientific community of the truth of what she saw. Her lifelong dedication to “seeing”, her flashes of intuitively seeing the pattern of the whole before actually being able to see the relation of parts, her “feeling for the organism” and how it grew, differentiated and adapted, placed her apart and called into play all her resources of autonomy, absorption and ability to be alone. Validation of her theory of “transposition” came eventually from microbiologists when in the late '60s and '70s they were confronting more and more evidence that did not fit the model. This “second revolution” in genetics is likely to have far reaching consequences in the study of evolutionary development.

Just as I (the reviewer) was despairing of my ability to convey in a nutshell the intricate excitement of this complex story, *The New York Review of Books* (3/24/84) arrived and there was a superb review by Stephen Jay Gould. My impulse was to throw out this review and simply recommend that everyone read Gould. Not only does he have the expert ability of someone inside the field of evolutionary biology to explain with brilliant concision the course between the first and second revolution in genetics, but he is highly sensitive to the particular kind of achievement that McClintock's life is. The article is written with exhilaration. Read it. And of course the book.

Keller heads her last chapter with a quotation from Pascal I can't resist repeating: “There are two equally dangerous extremes—to shut reason out, and to let nothing else in.”

BERNARD SHAW AS A WOMAN WRITER

Eliza, Candida, and Joan

Daniel Bernd

Had George Bernard Shaw been a woman, she probably would have the reputation as the pre-eminent feminist writer in English. One can make this judgment because Shaw possessed at the highest possible level the capacity to create characters and put them in situations where they speak, act, and think for themselves, without being pushed around and formed into creatures who reflect the authors' conscious and unconscious preconceptions on how they should act. A work of art has a life of its own, and few writers and critics have understood that as well as Shaw. And life, of course, has an art of its own, an art which is inherently subversive, resistant to mandates, goals, objectives, structures, and formulas which violate the root ethic of human beings, an ethic that knows, without being taught, that we must be treated as ends in ourselves, not as the mere means to someone else's ends.

. . . the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base. All the rest is misery, slavery, hell on earth . . .

It is her remarkable capacity for seeing into the true life of things that made it possible for Shaw to create women characters who, for the most part, are not a male playwright's notion of what women are or ought to be. That is, she was a true equalitarian as a writer. She treated everybody alike—even her imaginative creations. As she says,

Not that I disclaim the fullest responsibility for . . . all of my characters, pleasant and unpleasant. They are all right from their several points of view; and their points of view are, for the dramatic moment, mine also.

Her capacity to see the obvious when nobody had ever seen it before makes people very uncomfortable. Thus have arisen the crude and stupid dismissals of Shaw as some kind of supreme jokester, who was just being Irish.

She is not even safe from her friends, or at least from those who are attempting to make money off her work. The record jacket of *My Fair Lady*, which shows Shaw dangling Henry and Eliza by puppet strings, is a supreme vulgarization of both Shaw and the true import of *Pygmalion*. Generations of actors and audiences have not been able to face the meaning of *Pygmalion*, and

we could not expect Lerner and Lowe to do any better. Eliza does not want to marry Higgins at the end, refuses to be bullied by him, and will choose her own mate, thank you, and so much the worse for the audience's romantic expectations. It is curious, and significant, that readers and theatre-goers steadfastly refuse to accept what the text of the play clearly says: that chivalry is a form of contempt, that Colonel Pickering's unwavering civility is a device to keep people in their places, that the price of liberation is a loss of control over the liberated's destiny, and that bedding the student, in or out of marriage, is not the male teacher's prerogative and reward. It is with great relief, therefore, that the audience can turn to *My Fair Lady* and away from *Pygmalion* and thus not be bothered by any considerations of equality.

Shaw fought the battle all her life. She claimed, quite convincingly, that the playwright was the leading authority on sex appeal, and certainly there is no lack of sexually attractive women in her plays, but it is also clear that her women have to struggle free from the bonds of mere sexuality in order to be taken seriously as fully realized human beings. (What's a pretty little thing like you doing worrying your head about things like war, politics, religion, or art?)

One key to Shaw's work is the understanding that many of her women simply refuse to accept the role that others attempt to thrust upon them. Candida tires of being everybody's all-purpose Earth Mother, and devastates her husband and her would-be lover by explaining to them, in a scene which borders upon psychological and emotional cruelty, that they both are posturing weaklings who could not be trusted out alone if she were not there to prop them up with illusions of competence. Candida understands that in her Edwardian world, an intelligent and vital woman with little formal education and no independent means must be content to be the best mother and wife that she can be, but she is not above cracking the whip on the dumb males who idealize her. In other words, Candida is one of life's realists which, in Shaw's view, consists of about two percent of the population.

Candida reminds one of some of Shakespeare's women. One is struck by how often Shakespeare presents strong women, women who are clearly superior to the male inhabitants of their imaginative world. While we mourn the death of Juliet, she is at least saved from having to live the rest of her life with an adolescent twerp like Romeo. Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice*, emerges from the lovely world of Belmont,

descends upon Venice and straightens out the male mess, and returns to Belmont with the men she has saved from their own folly. She is the prisoner of love, and one is saddened by the thought of her having to live the rest of her life with an empty head like Bassanio. She is a sister to the Rosaline of *As You Like It* and the Beatrice of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Male bonding must be broken, and the men must not find out that they are not really in charge.

We must honor Shakespeare for his genius in questioning, however subtly and indirectly, the power arrangements between the sexes. But Shakespeare was an Elizabethan and his view of the human condition was at bottom conservative. It is not that, obviously, the world which is restored to equilibrium at the end leaves the men in places of power (they think), but that he had no coherent view of any other possibility. It is not that Shakespeare is against equality, but that the idea as we understand it simply would not have occurred to him.

Not so with Shaw. She did not believe equality easily obtainable, but it was the driving principle behind her political and social writing as well as her plays. For that reason the life of Joan of Arc appealed to her, for it allowed her to bring into focus the themes that had impelled her development from her first well-made "Unpleasant Plays" through her Chekovian *Heartbreak House*: the conflict between the Life Force working through the human will against the tyranny of dead idealism encrusted in human institutions; the necessity of tragi-comedy with an unresolved ending to ensure the audience's continuing involvement in the play's themes and issues; the refusal to divide human beings into melodramatic categories of good and evil (although she believed in both); and the understanding that a better world can never come about without equality between the sexes.

Shaw's *Saint Joan* is carefully drawn as a woman who knows the truth that will set us free, but who also knows that truth will not overcome dressed in women's clothing. Shaw depended upon the documents of the trial for much of her dialogue, and it is astonishing from the perspective of the twentieth century the mere fact of putting on male soldiers' garb could be regarded as evidence of heresy, witchcraft, and evil spirits. Joan herself made it obvious why she wanted to wear men's clothes—she did not want the troops she was leading to think of her as a woman, but as a fellow soldier. She was working God's will on earth, and she wanted no irrelevant considerations of romance to interfere with the

necessary business of getting the Dauphin crowned King and forcing the English to go home where they belonged. What she did not and could not understand was that her visions of the future (which after all, worked) ran smack up against the inertia of a feudal system, dominated by a universal church. Shaw presents Joan as the first effective Protestant and Nationalist, but these are only metaphors of the collision between the irresistible Life Force and evolutionary change against the would-be immovable objects of worldly institutions. The princes and prelates of fourteenth century Europe did not want any new definitions of what it means to be in this world but not of it forced upon them by a mere shepherd girl from a provincial backwater. And while they appropriated the fruits of her victories, they made her pay for her presumption with her life. Joan learned one of the hardest of life's lessons: nothing fails like success.

If we are in any doubt that the lesson has to be relearned every day, consider Otto Preminger's movie of Shaw's play. It should have been called *The Rape of Shaw's Joan*. Aside from the egregious error of letting Grahame Greene write the screen play, which would be akin to asking William Buckley to edit the papers of Gore Vidal, Preminger hired an untrained Iowa schoolgirl to play Joan and injected a romantic interest by having the French general Dunois gaze yearningly at Joan whenever possible. In other words, Preminger pandered to what he thought was the popular audience's belief that no woman could be a hero unless there was a little sex brought in to explain why she had to do the men's work for them. Hollywood's treatment of Shaw's Joan is a perfect paradigm of much of their attitude toward serious literature. If you cannot face the implications of the play, distort the meaning. After all, we are all supposed to believe, with Dorothy at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, that happiness lies in our own back yard. We do not want any saints making waves or questioning the existing dispositions of power and money.

But Shaw's *Saint Joan* survives even the movies. Like all great works of literature, Shaw's *Saint Joan* is not unlocked by one key, one interpretation does not satisfy, and one reading or production does not exhaust its possibilities. And we must not flatten her play by imposing a feminist or any other ideology upon it. But there can be little doubt that Joan refreshes and embodies an honorable tradition in literature. The story of the life and death of Joan of Lorraine is a necessary subject to Shaw because her struggle is

emblematic of the human condition. For Shaw, we are all God's people, given free will. We are created equal, but through the tragedy of the individual, isolated consciousness we must struggle to create equality in human institutions. Shaw was willing to subject the traditional notions of the proper relations between men and women to a radical scrutiny when few others understood what that might mean. Saint Joan did, and Shaw found her a worthy hero/heroine for all of us to emulate.

He once claimed to have modeled Joan on the female part of his own consciousness. One suspects that Shaw wished that he could have been the Saint Joan of the twentieth century. Failing that, we can all be grateful for the grace and artistry with which he has made Joan live for us, as part of our own times.

SAINT JOAN

"Society is an organism that suffers the strange necessity of justifying its ends and appetites."

O. Paz, *Labyrinth of Solitude*

Time warp
dun feathered bird entrapped
wriggling through the snake skin tunnel
of narrow vision
to the far light
the promise
of sudden soaring
scraping furiously along scaled
walls
that skewer snatches of flesh
her coat of mail melting to a death mask.
From the womb of glory
exploding at last into the sun.
Not a cold star flight
instead
the raving eye
of an everlasting solar storm
unsatiated hunger
that consumes
feathers, bones,
eyes;
falling from a space
the bird still circling
French fields
shadowing our late Dark Ages
calling over the empty hills
of our relentless decimation
yet
still tumbling
into the fire feast
of that Medieval square in May.
For we are charged
to seize the exiled creature
fallen from his age
to feed our primal blaze:
sole light
against the jungle monsters
His cries attack
an unbearable silence
and hold at bay
the nameless horror
of perceiving
our existence.

Joan Barchard Lewis



Nora Ephron

"HEARTBURN"

by Nora Ephron

Margaret Brady

They say you can't judge a book by its cover. That seems to be true, at least in this case.

When I picked up a copy of Nora Ephron's *Heartburn*, I thought I was going to get what the cover offered me: "a novel."

What I didn't expect to find was (as newspapers and magazines now describe it) a "thinly disguised story about Nora Ephron's 'short-lived marriage' to *Washington Post* reporter Carl Bernstein.

But that, unfortunately, is an apt description of Nora Ephron's first "novel." What did I learn from reading *Heartburn*? That Carl Bernstein must be a terrible person—egotistical, self-centered—and that Ephron must have gotten a lot of things off her chest in writing *Heartburn*.

Forgive me, though, when I say that I don't care to read a slightly fictionalized account of a real-life marriage gone sour. Magazines like *People* and *Us* fill that need. But while *Heartburn* may not be a great piece of fiction writing, it is a very contemporary and sad and, sometimes, witty look at the state of some relationships between men and women today.

Meet Rachel Samstat (our novel's heroine and first-person narrator), a 38-year-old cookbook writer who is married to Mark Feldman, a syndicated columnist; their marriage is the second one for both and it appears that it won't last long. Mark has fallen in love with Thelma Rice, "a fairly tall person with a neck as long as an arm and a nose as long as a thumb and you should see her legs, never mind her feet, which are sort of splayed."

To make matters worse, Mark's affair comes at a most inappropriate time—the seventh month of Rachel's pregnancy (their soon-to-be-second child). The rest of the story details Rachel's discovery of her husband's infidelity and the eventual break-up. And so it appears that Rachel the cookbook author has a recipe for nearly everything (including her prized vinaigrette)—everything, that is, but a healthy relationship.

The unifying thread winding through *Heartburn* is Nora Ephron's humor—sometimes sharp, sometimes strangely sad, self-pitying, but usually entertaining, as any fan of *Crazy Salad* and *Scribble Scribble* (essay collections) can testify. And it is this humor which saves *Heartburn* keeping it from being merely a "I'll get back at you" exercise. This is because Rachel (and, obviously, Nora Ephron) is able to laugh at herself as well as others.

This is Rachel on marriage: "One thing I have never understood is how to work it so that when you're married, things keep happening to you. Things happen to you when you're single. You meet new men, you travel along, you learn new tricks, you read Trollope, you try sushi, you buy nightgowns, you shave your legs. Then you get married, and the hair grows in. . ."

Rachel on husbands: "When I was in college, I had a list of what I wanted in a husband. A long list. I wanted a registered Democrat, a bridge player, a linguist with a particular fluency in French, a subscriber to *The New Republic*, a tennis player. I wanted a man who wasn't bald, who wasn't fat, who wasn't covered with too much body hair. I wanted a man with long legs and a small ass and laugh wrinkles around the eyes. . ."

Frankly, I don't have a whole lot to say about *Heartburn*. It seemed so simplistic, so glib that I couldn't get interested in analyzing it.

But I hope that Nora Ephron will try writing another novel again. And soon. We need the strength and humor of voices like hers.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

簾捲西風人比黃花瘦

The calligraphy is taken from Li Ching-chao's most famous poem, "Ninth Day, Ninth Month", and reads as follows:

"The West Wind blows the curtains
And I am frailer than the yellow chrysanthemums."

In praise of poets

In this issue we present an armful of contemporary poets, an homage to our ancient mentor, the divine Sappho herself, and it seems fitting to look eastward to the China of the 11th Century for another recognizable human voice. Li Ching-chao (1084-c.1151) is universally considered to be China's greatest woman poet. Her life was colorful and rich, according to her translator, Ling Chung (New Directions, 1979). She was a scholar of history and classics, a literary critic, an art collector, a specialist in bronze and stone inscriptions, a painter, a calligrapher, and a political commentator. Her life was turbulent; after the death of her beloved husband, she married a minor official who abused her both verbally and physically. She divorced him, was imprisoned, exiled, and as she grew older suffered many hardships and loneliness, but continued to create art until her death. Compare this early poem:

"Joy of Wine"

I remember in Hsi T'ing
All the many times
We got lost in the sunset,
Happy with wine,
And could not find our way back.
When the evening came,
Exhausted with pleasure,
We turned our boat.
By mistake we found ourselves even deeper
In the clusters of lotus blossoms,
And startled the gulls and egrets
From the sand bars.
They crowded into the air
And hastily flapped away
To the opposite shore.

With this fragment of her later work from:

"A Song of Departure"

But now who will share with me
The joys of wine and poetry?
Tears streak my rouge
My hairpins are too heavy.

Yet, her special sensibility remains intact.

"Cassia Flowers"

After my sickness
My temples have turned gray.
I lie and watch the waning moon
Climb up the gauze window screen.
I boil a drink of cardamon leaf tips
Instead of tea.

It is good to rest on my pillows
And write poetry.
Before the door
Beautiful in wind, shadow and rain,
All day the fragrant cassia blossoms
Bend toward me, delicate and subtle.



Margaret Brady and I made a trek to the Art Institute of Chicago to hear Denise Levertov read her poetry. She was a child prodigy who wrote exquisite verse at the age of twelve. "With some temerity" she reports, she sent off a raft of her poems to T. S. Eliot who wrote back a many paged typed response filled with good advice. Later she was the protegee' of Herbert Reed. Here is her first published work, written just before Dunkirk:

"Listening to Distant Guns"
The roses tremble; oh, the sunflower's eye
Is opened wide in sad expectancy.
Westward and back the circling swallows fly,
The rooks' battalions dwindle near the hill.
That low pulsation in the east is war:
No bell now breaks the evening's silent dream.
The bloodless clarity of evening's sky
Betrays no whisper of the battle-scream.

That early work, the voice of an astonishingly gifted child, clearly reflects the influence of the English poets she must have been reading. In 1960, twenty years later, she wrote these lines in "Art":

The best work is made
from hard, strong materials,
obstinately precise —
the line of the poem, onyx, steel.
It's not a question of
false constraints—but
to move well and get somewhere
wear shoes that fit.
.....
Pit yourself against granite,
hew basalt, carve hard ebony—
intractable
guardians of contour.

In these lines we recognize the mature voice of the seasoned artist, competent in her craft, singing to us in a voice and from a spirit uniquely her own.

Margaret Brady has contributed her report on our evening with Levertov. See page 30.

ABOUT OUR STAFF

As we begin Volume 7, the Quarterly comes to a major shift in the editorial and production process. Joan Lewis, who has been here on the scene for every issue since Volume 1, Number 1, in Summer of 1977, and has been a stalwart worker on every aspect of the magazine, from writing and editing to moving the copy through the system of word processing, typesetting, to graphics and printer, has now moved to Powell, Ohio. While we are losing her daily presence and support, we are not losing her interest, commitment or energy. She will continue to work for the magazine, editing, writing, helping to develop future issues, from Ohio. We know that this is possible, because for the entire year of 1980, this editor was in the Netherlands, and keeping the mails (and occasionally the long distance telephone lines) hopping with copy. Joan played a major part in the collection of the work in this issue—a fitting farewell, in a way, to a comrade with a sensitive poet's eye and ear.

A new name now appears for the first time on our masthead. John A. Ostenburg, Director of University Relations at this university, has recently come on board. He is a staunch feminist, and likes what we do here. John considers *The Creative Woman* a publication of "quiet dignity." We welcome him heartily to our staff, and look forward to a steadily improving quality due to his high level of expertise and experience in publishing. This issue already reflects his influence.

The seasons turn, for us as for the Earth. We inhale the sweet new Spring air that comes across the prairies in May, and begin the next phase. Stay with us.

HEH

(In reference to the issue on men changing.)

I'm the one who moved away to another city (from the Chicago men's group you wrote about Spring-Summer 83). I have read your article many times, and I really thought you did a good job putting it together from our tape recording. It felt good to me to discover that as a woman, and a journalist, you could present the gist of what the men's group was about so clearly. It's uplifting to see it in print as clear, or clearer, than I could present it. Thank you.

We either learn to live together, women and men, children and adults, communists and capitalists and anarchists and terrorists, or we all die together, ingloriously.

I like the magazine. I'm hungry for all aspects of hope that I can find in these days.

Peace to you,
Greg Nooney.

(In reference to the issue on goddesses.)

I would **not** like to renew my subscription to Creative Woman. My mother-in-law subscribed for me in the first place. I have enjoyed some of your issues very much but Fall 83 offended me specifically. Where is equal time for people who experience the reality of God **outside** themselves? Her thesis that an "internal authority" should guide thought and feeling gives each person the responsibility of being his or her own God. Very attractive to justify any or all behaviors to have no external laws or codes. It lets each person be responsible for himself or herself and irresponsible to others.

Besides the above, I am weary of feminism. Both my parents were feminists. Enough already! Re: simplicity. What's with the glossy cover and fancy paper? I respected the other format better.

Mildred Havill Juskevics

Report on Fund-raising

Over one thousand dollars has been deposited to date in the GSU Foundation, restricted to *The Creative Woman*. This fund is used to develop an issue, from initial planning to interviewing and correspondence, editing and proofing. It makes possible a scope and variety that would be impossible without these extra funds. Karen Degenhart, for example, has been developing the issue on Women in the Performing Arts, modestly supported by this fund.

Your donations are gratefully received. To express our appreciation, we send a framed print to all donors of \$25 or more, made payable to the GSU Foundation (restricted to *The Creative Woman*). See the sample displayed, including "Primordial Goddess" by Judy Chicago, the Jan Saudek cover of our Spring-Summer 1983 issue, dolphins at play, or details from Botticelli's "Primavera."

And for donors of \$50 or more, you may select from framed original photographs that first appeared in these pages: for example, Sharon Rank's "Deer Creek," Rhoda Riley's, "Feather and Stone", or Susan Eckert's "Wilderness Stoplight" or "Lone Canoe".

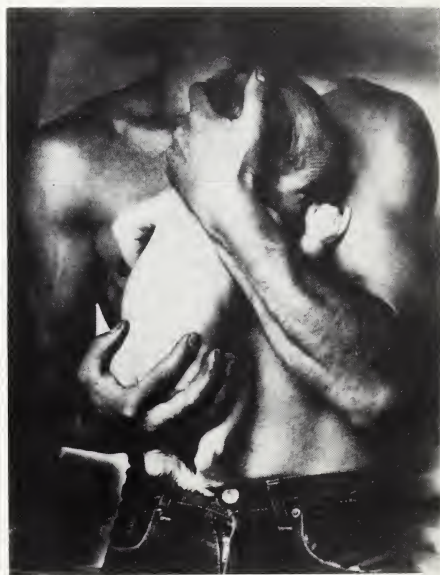
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Primordial Goddess by Judy Chicago



Detail from Primavera by Botticelli



Spring-Summer 1983 Cover, Photo by Jan Saudek



Deer Creek by Sharon Rank



Wilderness Stoplight by Susan Eckert



Lone Canoe by Susan Eckert



Feather and Stone by Rhoda Riley

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CONTACT: MARY DALY
PRESS OFFICER
212/582-4440

Women around the world are being silenced. They are victims of intimidation, illegal arrest and detention, and torture by governmental and para-governmental agents. They are victims of official campaigns to deny human rights and to crush the human spirit. In scores of nations—South Africa and China, El Salvador and Romania, Turkey and the Soviet Union, Egypt and Ethiopia—governments take illegal and extra-legal action against women who speak out or women who are perceived as potential opposition.

These women are of all ages, from all walks of life. They are trade unionists, agricultural workers, office workers, housewives, journalists, physicians, and attorneys. Most are on the forefront of social and political change, and many are leaders. But others are victims of human rights abuses simply because they are wives, mothers, daughters, or friends of those deemed "dangerous." What is happening to them should not happen to anyone.

Some women have disappeared without a trace—suddenly taken from their home by armed men, pulled from a streetcar, or forcibly abducted with their children. They have vanished, never to be heard from again.

Some women have been banned—officially removed from society and forbidden to write, publish, teach, travel, or attend social, business, professional or political activities. Those banned are often sent to remote areas far from home and family.

Many are prisoners of conscience, arrested for their beliefs, for expressing opinions, for disclosing information that governments would rather keep from the public. Many are imprisoned without trial or sentenced by special *ad hoc* courts. For these women, free expression and free association have had devastating consequences. As women they are vulnerable to special exploitation and abuse. Mothers are abducted with their children, who are then threatened and in some cases tortured in front of them. Women pregnant when detained may give birth in prison, then have their babies taken to an unknown fate. Other women are subjected to sexual assault as a form of torture.

Calculated inhuman treatment, wielded with the full force of official power, shatters the lives of women and of their children and families. For every silenced woman, we must speak out. Amnesty International has found that if enough people act, imprisoned women can be protected and freed.

SAIDA BOTAN ELMI

Housewife, Detained with
out Charge in Somalia

THE WOMEN'S PRISON

Iran

MARIANELA GARCIA VILLAS

Human Rights Activist
Killed in El Salvador

- ☐ I would like to join Amnesty International USA's Urgent Action Network and send at least one message a month on behalf of a woman. I understand you will send the necessary materials at no charge.
- ☐ I would like more information about women prisoners of conscience.
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- ☐ I enclose \$ _____ as a contribution towards the work of Amnesty International USA.

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Address _____
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State _____ Zip _____

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New York, NY 10019

NIT & WIT

CHICAGO'S ARTS MAGAZINE

NIT&WIT, Chicago's Arts Magazine, voted #2 in the country in its category by Writer's Digest, August 1983. Leonard J. Dominguez, Editor; Cheryl Kent, Fiction Editor; Elaine Madsen, Bookworks Editor; Larry Hunt, Poetry Editor; Cathy Favakeh, Colleen Grace, Vicky Gorski and Marla Showfer, Cultural Guide Editors; Kathleen J. Cummings, Publisher. P.O. Box 14685, Chicago, IL 60614, (312) 248-1183. Founded in 1977.

Art in all of its forms is the ultimate expressions of Life, of what it means to be human. NIT&WIT publishes the best available fiction, poetry, art, photography and humor from worldwide submissions. Additionally, regular features encompassing the performing arts of film, art, music, theatre, and dance provide the NIT&WIT reader with a continuing sense of the State of the Arts.

NIT&WIT requests that manuscripts be limited to 1,500 words. Include a stamped, self-addressed postcard for a reply. Photography and art are best submitted in black and white. Work will be returned if submitted with SASE with adequate postage. Reporting time is 8 weeks. First time rights only. Payment for now is in a contributor's copy and exposure to literary readers all over the country. Sample copy, \$2. NIT&WIT is bi-monthly, readership is 45,000. 8½ X 11, offset, 68 pages. Subscriptions: \$9.00 yr, \$16.00/2 yrs.

ANNUAL CONTESTS: Short Fiction, announced in Nov/Dec issue, deadline Febr. 15.
Poetry, announced in March/April issue, deadline June 15.
Photography, announced in the July/August issue, deadline Oct. 15.

Contests carry cash awards and winners are published. Send SASE for specific contest guidelines.

PLEXUS

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Dear Sisters:

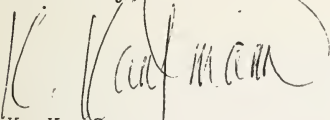
I am a feminist writer/editor beginning work on an anthology about women who have given their children up for adoption. Little has been written by, for or about these women, and the interest and response I have received on the project thus far leads me to believe it is necessary and important work.

I am enclosing a call for contributors which hope you will run in your publication. I want the anthology to encompass the perspectives and experiences of women of all racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. It is, therefore, essential that the notice reach as many women as possible.

At present, I have no outside funding for the project and would appreciate it very much if the notice could be run for free. If this is not possible, please send me information on you classified advertising rates.

Thank you for your time and help. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me at Plexus.

Sincerely,



K. Kaufmann

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